



Montana

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Main Street Montana Fall Edition Highlights Fergus County

HELENA - - - Nearly forty years ago, Warren Raitt, Roger Johnson, Jimmy Kaaro and Jack Songer protected the streets of Lewistown. Today their images grace the cover of the fall edition of the *Main Street Montana* highlighting Fergus County and the economic and social impacts of Corrections.

“We’ve heard from employers feeling the workforce pinch of Montana’s record low unemployment rate,” said Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly. “In this edition, we expose the public to the multitude of job skills and training opportunities inmates have available to reenter Montana’s workforce, upon release, as contributing and productive citizens.”

According to Kelly, in addition to easing the burden of finding workers, hiring offenders can benefit employers through tax credits. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) allows a tax credit of up to \$2,400 per employee on wages paid during the first year of employment.

Offenders represent a significant workforce in Montana. The Department of Corrections supervises about 13,200 offenders, and about eight out of every 10 of those are in correctional programs in communities throughout Montana that allow them to hold jobs.

Lewistown and Fergus County are playing a key role in the state's efforts to manage offenders outside of prison walls. Montana's newest correctional facility is the Nexus treatment center for meth addiction, located in Lewistown. This 80-bed program is a crucial tool in the state's effort to combat the effects of methamphetamine.

"Nexus represents one of this nation's most innovative approaches to meth and breaking the grip that the drug has on its victims," said Mike Ferriter, Corrections Department director. "We believe this program, and the one for women in Boulder, can serve as a national model for states struggling to find a new and effective solution to this dangerous and growing problem of meth addiction."

The Main Street Montana is a bi-annual publication produced by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry in partnership with the Montana Department of Corrections, Department of Commerce and the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

An electronic copy of the publication is available at www.mainstreet.mt.gov

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